

## NEVER TRUST AN APPLE AND OTHER COLLECTION DISPLAY KNOWLEDGE

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Where, in a small town, can you find clowns, original art sculpture, penguins, Christmas in July, and the American Civil War? In the display collections at the Danville Public Library, Danville, Indiana, one can find all these varied collections featured. Whether you are browsing around the Children's or Adult Services area, or even the Indiana History Room, there is a new collection to be seen each month.

Finding a display to keep interest can be a difficult challenge. Displays are not commonly thought of as art. Patrons might usually think of a display as more of a collection display in which, perhaps, stamps might be featured or decorations for the holidays might be displayed. Displays, collections or otherwise, are not always what they seem. A display must be arranged in such a way as to catch a patron's eye, much like art work. Small items can also spice up a display, making it more appealing to patrons.

For example, one display at DPL featured the collection of a button collector who competes with the collection in shows and competitions. The buttons were not only arranged to show the collection to its best advantage, but in artistic designs to please the eye as well.

"Grab them and stop them" is the general rule of the display. A dry display with commonly seen subject matter will quickly blend in with its surroundings. A good display catches the immediate interest of the casual passerby. Community, along with unusual human interest, can accomplish this goal. An example of a successful display at DPL was one that featured items concerning Mt. St. Helens, displayed on the anniversary of the eruption of the volcano. The display included personal photos, ash from the eruption, and books relating to the subject. Other displays that have caught the attention of patrons at DPL include displays featuring woodcarvings, a coffee collection with a variety of coffee beans from around the world, and a display of art pottery.

Plants and fruits seem to attract the public's attention. One attention getting display was, of all things, a

display of weeds. Yes, those little plants that people continually pull out of the ground brought a lot of interest as a display. The showcase, Invasive Weeds, was a surprisingly popular one. However, staff had to be always on the lookout to be sure the plants were not rotting. (Rotting weeds tend not to make an attractive display.) Patrons also enjoyed an apple display that was featured at DPL. They loved seeing the variety of apples. Free apples provided for the patrons also added to the popularity of the display. But, like the weeds, one had to be wary for apples that were getting past their prime. The display had to be checked constantly to be sure the apples were still fresh. A sour smell was a sure indication of trouble.

A display in the Children's Department had a similar situation. An apple was among the featured items in a fairy tale display. When taken out of the display case, insects were found to be munching happily all over the apple. So, despite the popularity of plants and fruits in displays, best leave them to the green house.

The Children's Department at DPL sometimes has a more difficult time with displays. Since the shelf height of the display case there is set firmly in an unchanging place, it can be difficult to find a display that will fit. Shelves that can be shifted greatly enhance the usefulness of a display case. For example, miniature houses cannot be adjusted to different heights to fit a case. Other items, however, such as Spanish dolls or Beanie Babies, may fit in perfectly, so the size of a display is always a consideration for the Children's Department. At times, specific themes are sought for a particular display case, such as a fairy tale museum display that was exhibited. This display featured a fairy tale theme that advertised the theme of the DPL children's summer reading program.

In all departments, staff members determine what will be in their displays. Those who bring items in to the library for a display are provided any materials they may need to make the display more attractive, such as colored paper or sparkles.

In the Indiana and Genealogy room, the displaying of musty artifacts requires another set of rules. In a

world that revolves around history, certain things have to be checked that are not necessarily considered in other displays. Such factors as lights, temperature, and whether or not to use cloth, have to be considered. There can be no direct light on older archival items. High temperatures must also be avoided. If an item is fragile, such as old paper, birth certificates, and military drafts, cloth cannot touch it.

If the display is in an out of the way location, posting signs that announce the display may get more people interested in seeing it. A sure way to catch people's attention is to feature the collection of a local person. This brings friends and relatives in to see the collection. People are also attracted to a display when the theme of the display ties into a current event, such as the Mt. St. Helen eruption anniversary display that was mentioned earlier. Another example, done by the

Indiana Room, was a James Dean display. This display coincided with the yearly James Dean festival held in Fairmont, Indiana.

The newest addition to the library, that has been a big hit, is the mini display case. This case features any smaller collections or odds and ends not usually placed on display. Located right by the checkout services, patrons can view the mini display while waiting to check out materials. Small side items, such as authentic civil war canon balls, have also caught the interest of patrons as they waited to check out their items.

Each display needs to answer to it's important purpose-each creates public interest and increased circulation. The displays also satisfy the public's innate curiosities along with the need to show and share their wide variety of interests and hobbies.